



**Ministry of Women's Affairs**

**Palestinian Women's Political Participation: Reality and Ambitions  
on the eve of 8<sup>th</sup> of March**

**March 8, 2026**

## Introduction

This is the Palestinian woman: she has always been, and remains, capable of making a profound difference in her society and homeland. On the eve of March 8, International Women's Day—a recurring national and human rights milestone—we invoke the historical struggle and steadfastness of Palestinian women. We also renew our unwavering commitment to their inalienable rights, including the right to a dignified life and full participation in building their society and shaping its future.

Strengthening the political participation of Palestinian women is the cornerstone for achieving gender equality and building a just, democratic society. The upcoming local council elections represent a vital national obligation and a real opportunity to enhance women's presence in decision-making positions at the local level. Local governance serves as a fundamental gateway for enshrining the principles of partnership, justice, and accountability. Accordingly, the Ministry of Women's Affairs emphasizes the importance of ensuring effective female participation, whether through candidacy, voting, or leading electoral lists, reflecting the true role of women in Palestinian society.

Furthermore, the upcoming Palestinian constitutional milestones represent a pivotal moment to ensure the principles of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in constitutional texts. They are also essential for consolidating women's political rights explicitly, including the right to fair representation and participation in the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities. The Ministry stresses that any future constitutional process must include broad female participation in drafting committees and national dialogue to ensure the constitution reflects the aspirations and rights of Palestinian women.

In this context, the Ministry continues to implement the "Women's Political Empowerment Action Plan 2025-2030." This plan focuses on preparing female leaders, building the capacities of female candidates, enhancing the legislative environment supportive of women's participation, and monitoring indicators related to political representation at both local and national levels. The Ministry is also working to integrate gender issues into government policies to ensure an increase in women's participation in local councils and national institutions.

Empowering women politically, especially in the upcoming electoral and constitutional milestones, is not an option but a national necessity to strengthen democracy and good governance. It is essential for building a political system that reflects societal diversity and responds to the needs of all citizens. Without the full and influential participation of women, it is impossible to speak of true justice or representation.

**H.E. Mona Al-Khalili**

**Minister of Women's Affairs**

## Report: Political Participation of Women (2025-2026)

This report presents the reality of Palestinian women's participation in political life and decision-making positions. This participation is a fundamental indicator of the level of democracy and the quality of governance, as well as a primary pillar for achieving gender justice and sustainable development.

The analysis is based on the national constitutional framework, represented by the Palestinian Amended Basic Law, and international obligations joined by the State of Palestine. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all of which emphasize ensuring full and effective participation of women in leadership and policymaking.

The report shows that while women constitute approximately 49% of the total Palestinian population, this demographic weight is not reflected in a balanced manner in political and administrative leadership positions. Despite relative improvements achieved through the quota system, women's representation remains below the level of parity and is often concentrated in membership rather than leadership positions.

Representation in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) reached about 20% before its suspension, while women's representation in the Cabinet does not exceed 12%. Furthermore, women's access to the presidency of local authorities is very low (1%), and they hold only 14% of senior leadership positions in the public sector. Their representation is also limited in senior judicial, economic, and union decision-making roles, clearly demonstrating the "glass ceiling" phenomenon that restricts career advancement despite women's high education levels and broad participation in the public sector.

The report highlights several structural and institutional challenges, including women's limited access to the financial resources necessary for candidacy, weak leadership empowerment mechanisms within parties and institutions, and the absence of binding measures to ensure actual representation in senior positions. These factors intersect with cultural and social challenges, such as persistent stereotypes regarding women's roles and weak institutional and community support for female candidates, particularly in rural areas.

The report concludes by emphasizing the need to move from a "minimum representation" approach to one of "actual and influential empowerment." This can be achieved by strengthening and expanding the quota to include leadership and executive positions, adopting temporary special measures, developing support and funding programs for female candidates, and establishing a national

mechanism to monitor the implementation of commitments regarding women's participation in decision-making to ensure sustainable equality.

## I. Legal Framework Governing Women's Political Participation

While women make up 49% of the population, official statistics show this is not balanced in leadership. The right to political participation is based on the Palestinian Amended Basic Law of 2003, which stipulates the principle of equality and non-discrimination, guaranteeing citizens' rights to participate in political life, including candidacy, voting, and holding public office. This constitutional basis is a binding reference for all legislation governing elections and senior appointments.

Internationally, the State of Palestine is committed to CEDAW, particularly Article 7 (guaranteeing women's rights to vote, run for office, and participate in policy formulation) and Article 4 (permitting "temporary special measures" to accelerate de facto equality). Additionally, UNSCR 1325 provides a normative framework for women's participation in decision-making in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, while SDG Goal 5 (Target 5.5) emphasizes full participation and equal opportunities for leadership.

## II. Women's Representation in Elected Councils

**1. The Legislative Council:** The female quota system in the election law helped increase representation in the PLC by requiring lists to include a minimum number of women. However, representation remained at 20%, below parity, and was further hindered by the political division and the suspension of the council since 2007.

**2. Local Authorities:** Election laws for local authorities specify a 30% quota for women. While this increased the number of women in municipal and village councils, particularly in urban areas, challenges remain. According to the 2020-2021 elections, only 1% of local council presidents are women, while they represent 21.8% of council members. Only one out of fifteen governorates is currently led by a woman.

## III. Women's Representation in Executive and Institutional Decision-Making

At the executive level, women's representation in the Palestinian Cabinet is approximately 12%. In the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) structures, there is relative improvement but it remains below expectations: representation is 23% in the Palestinian Central Council and 19% in the Palestinian National Council. These figures lack effective mechanisms to ensure women reach positions of actual influence.

In the judiciary, women constitute 19% of judges and 18% of public prosecutors. While showing a gradual increase, their access to senior judicial positions remains limited. In the economic sector, the gap is wider: women hold only 1% of board seats in Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture, and 15.3% in companies regulated by the Capital Market Authority. Professional unions also show a "gender gap," with women nearly absent from leadership in the Medical Association and having low representation in Engineering and Pharmacy unions due to institutional cultures and internal election mechanisms.

Paradoxically, while women make up 48% of the Palestinian public sector workforce, they hold only 14% of senior leadership positions (Director General and above). This indicates a "glass ceiling" despite their high qualifications. In the security sector, women represent 7% of personnel, mostly in administrative roles.

#### IV. Structural and Cultural Challenges

##### **Structural and Institutional Challenges:**

- Limited access for women to leadership positions within the government and executive councils. \* Difficulty in accessing the financial resources required for election campaigns.

##### **Cultural and Social Challenges:**

- Stereotypes, particularly in rural areas, regarding the requirements of political work (such as intensive meetings and travel) act as barriers.
- Lack of institutional and community support for female candidates competing for open seats outside the quota.

#### V. Final Recommendations

1. Reaffirming commitment to the decisions of the Central and National Councils to enhance women's representation by developing and expanding the quota system to ensure qualitative representation in all leadership positions.
2. Aligning electoral legislation with national trends to include binding arrangements ensuring women reach presiding positions in local authorities and elected councils.
3. Integrating the principle of equality and non-discrimination into any future constitutional processes or legislative reforms, ensuring significant female participation in drafting committees.

4. Developing institutional mechanisms to monitor the implementation of national decisions regarding political empowerment through clear indicators.

5. Strengthening partnerships with political forces and civil society to translate national commitments into practical measures that establish women's political participation as a national and constitutional right.